The Pagan Library

Funeral rites

Oz Caliburn

A long while ago, I said I would post the funeral service that I had put together for my sister. Having at long last got my act together, here it is. The sources for the rite were "Magical Rites from the Crystal Well" by Fitch, and "The Book of the Prophet" by Gibran. A couple of the poems were written by my other sister, and by my father. The final poem is unsourced, but I first saw it in a copy of "The Wiccan", which was an AustPagan newsletter.

As a bit of background, my sister Vicki was spastic and mentally retarded. She died at the age of 35, after renal failure. My wife and I were at her deathbed, and actually took her across - no easy task, as her mind was very hard to "grip". Vicki, although severely retarded (mentally she was about 3-4, could not read etc.) had grasped the fact that she wasn't going to get better from her last illness, and had in fact asked me to "help her die".

I hope that this rite, my last gift to my sister (even if I have taken it from various sources), may help inspire some of you who find yourself in similar circumstances. It is non-denominational, focuses on no particular deity, and served it's purpose admirably at the time.

Part 1

We have for a while lost one who is dear to us, And we all feel the loss. But it is only for a time, and we will lose our sorrow.

There is a reason for being here, and a reason for going. The Other Side, the Places Beyond, Are warm, pleasing and beautiful with all ills gone, and youth anew.

There is a reason for leaving, when the purpose of this life is done. We must all journey beyond to pause, to rest, and to wait for those who are loved, In a place far from the cares of this world, with happiness and strength renewed. For dying is only a mode of forgetting, a way of rest, a way of returning to the Eternal Source, however we may see It.

It is said in ancient lore -

"Arrayed in some new fleshly disguise,
Another mother gives birth.
With sturdier limbs and brighter brain,
The old soul takes the road again".

(At this point, my other sister read this poem - I believe she wrote it herself, but from where she drew her inspiration, I can only wonder)

You came and touched so many hearts
In so many different ways.
You gave so much, and asked very little in return.
There is an emptiness as if a part of me is missing,
But I am sure with time you will show me how to be whole again.
I know you are safe now, and nothing can harm you.
Remember, although we're apart,
We will always be together.

Part 2

Life and death are one, as the river and the sea are one. For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind, And to melt in the sun?

What is it to cease breathing, but to free the breath from it's restless tides That it may rise, and expand, and seek it's Gods unencumbered?

Only when you drink from the river of silence
Shall you indeed sing.
And when you have reached the mountaintop,
Then shall you begin to climb.
And when the Earth has claimed your limbs, then shall you truly dance.

(The following poem was written by my father - he says now that it is crude doggerel, but it speaks from his heart)

Vicki, Fate was most unkind,
Gave adult's body, but child's mind.
Yet from you so much love was spread
Everywhere you were seen to tread.
We'd like to think where'er you roam
In the new world you'll call your home,
There'll be no more pain, no more ills,
No more of this life's bitter pills.
Forgive us if today we're sad,
For we loved you so much - Mum and Dad.

Part 3

(This was read as the coffin was taken from the room used for the service to the crematorium)

Do not stand at my grave and weep,
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am sun on ripened grain,
I am the gentle Autumn's rain.
When you wake in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry,
I am not there, I did not die.

Those who were at the service, Pagan, Christian, and agnostic alike, all felt that these words expressed the "right" things at the death of a much-loved person.

Blessed be
O C
...But to be born again, you must die

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Quote of the moment:

Do not taunt the Happy Fun Ball. If Happy Fun Ball starts to smoke, run away and take cover.

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Last modified: August 19 2018 14:58:52